

A
PERSUASIVE
TO
Lay-Conformity :
Or, the Reasonableness of
CONSTANT COMMUNION
WITH THE
Church of *England*,
Represented to the
Dissenting Laity.

By BENJAMIN HOADLY. M. A.

L O N D O N :

Printed for Timothy Childe, at the White
Hart at the West end of St. Paul's
Church-Yard. 1704.

A
P E R S U A S I V E
T O
L A Y - C O N F O R M I T Y :

Or, the Reasonableness of
C O N S T A N T C O M M U N I O N
W I T H T H E

C h u r c h o f E n g l a n d ,

Represented to the

D i s s e n t i n g L a y .



By BENJAMIN HOADLEY, M. A.

L O N D O N

Printed for Thomas Gutter, at the
Wine and the Wine end of St. Paul's
Church-Yard 1704.

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I Desire it may be observed, That the following Papers concern only such of the Dissenters as judge Conformity to the Church established to be, in it self, lawful. As for those amongst them who are so little instructed in the nature of the Gospel, as to think Communion with our Church Unlawful and Antichristian; I could not hope to convince them of the contrary, in so small a Treatise as this: And therefore chuse rather to refer them to what hath been already written on this Head; and to the judgment of the best and most learned amongst their own Teachers; who profess themselves always ready to do justice to the Church of England, and to the Cause of Truth, by endeavouring to remove such groundless Prejudices out of the Minds of their Followers. And, whatever the Issue of these Papers may prove, it is to

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be hoped that the Persons concerned will, at least, think it no Crime or Injury, that we heartily desire their Constant Conformity, and endeavour to persuade them to it. I have nothing farther to add, but that I have chosen to argue with them, chiefly from the Considerations of Peace and Unity: because this Method is most easie to be understood; and most likely to move all who have any concern left for the honour of Christianity, or the Interest of the Protestant Cause.

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P E R S U A S I V E
T O

Lay-Conformity, &c.

I. **T**H E R E is no one thing, in which all *Protestants* amongst us, as well *Dissenters* as *Conformists*, do more agree, than in this plain Proposition, *That all causeless and unnecessary Divisions and Distinctions, are most carefully and conscientiously to be avoided by Christians.* In a deep sense of this Truth, the best *Writers* on all sides, have, with one Consent, and with one common Zeal and Concern, pressed upon the Consciences of Men, the Duty and Importance of *Peace and Concord*, and the Guilt and Mischief of *needless Distinctions*.

Distinctions and Divisions. This being so universally acknowledged, and so constantly taught, I shall not here enlarge upon it, but shall only make this use of it at present, that it is the judgment, not only of the *Conforming Divines*, but of your own *Teachers* also, That it concerns us all, as much as the Favour of Almighty God concerns us, to have a sacred and constant Regard to publick Peace and Unity.

II. Now there are but two Methods, in which our *Unity* can possibly be compassed; and a period put to all those Mischiefs and Evils, which have their Foundation in the distinction of our Churches, and the different Modes of Worship set up amongst us. For this must be done, either by the entire compliance of the *Conformists* with you, and the alteration of the *Established Church* according to your wishes; or, by your Compliance with them, and your Conformity to the Church already *Established*.

III. There is a third method which perhaps some sincere Christians (who know

know the Goodness and Charity of their own Tempers) may be apt to judge fully sufficient for this end without either of the former: And that is, the universal practice of Love, and Charity, and mutual Forbearance, amidst our different Modes of Worship. And I would to God, that there were any thing in the Tempers of Men to incline us to hope for an universal Practice of such God-like Virtues. But where is there any ground for us to expect this? Some few, it may be, imagine themselves possess'd of a true Christian Temper: But of how small importance is this to be esteemed, when we consider the great numbers of those who are wholly unacquainted with it; when we daily see, how much heat and violence is entirely owing to our Religious Distinctions; and what a handle they give as well to designing Men at Home, as to our professed Enemies Abroad, to inflame us against one another, and to make us the Instruments of bringing about *their* Designs? Since, therefore, this is so very evident, and open to the
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observation of all; and since you will all agree, that it is the indispensable Duty of us all to do whatever lies in our Power towards an established *Peace* and *Unity*; consider whether the way to accomplish this, be to look after our own Tempers only, without regarding the evil effects our *Practice* may have upon others; or to consult the natural tendencies of our Actions, and to guide our practice in all lawful things, as we find it most conducive to the publick *Peace*, and least likely to prove the occasion of Heat, and Discord, and Variance, to others.

This seems to me plainly recommended to all *Christians*, by the Law of Nature, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ; tho' they could be secure of preserving their own Tempers and Passions, within the bounds of Regularity and Decency, without this. For this results evidently from that obligation Christians are under, to regard conscientiously the Good of their Neighbour, the Honour of their holy Profession, and the Interest of that Society they belong to. But indeed

deed, were they only to consult the happiness of their own Breasts, and had they no concern with any besides themselves, this would certainly be the securest way of consulting and establishing their own Quiet, and good Temper ; to avoid whatever might probably, or could possibly, tend in its nature to taint their Hearts with Sowness, or Malice, or Passion ; as all will acknowledge, that *Divisions* do, of what sort soever they be. However I put it not upon this, at present, because some may evade this, and pretend to the greatest security of their own *Charity*, and good *Temper* : And because I write to those, who must be sensible, that we have all of us a solemn account to give of our Behaviour, as it respects the World about us ; and that we are all severely to answer for the evil effects of our *Practices* upon *human Society*, if it be found at last that we might have prevented them, and would not ; or that we might have seen the way to *Peace*, and yet wilfully shut our Eyes against the Light. This, therefore, I lay down as a certain *Rule*, to direct us all in our Conduct, *That it is our*

indispensable Duty to chuse that method of Practice, which tends most to the happiness of that Society to which we belong ; provided it be consistent with that Duty we owe to God, and with our own eternal Salvation.

IV. This being a certain and undoubted Maxim, it follows from hence, That it is your indispensable Duty to practise *Constant Conformity* to the *established Church*, as long as you acknowledge, that nothing is required of you in it, which is sinful, or unlawful ; for this lies within your Province ; and you cannot possibly act a better part, towards the reuniting the divided Hearts of this Nation. You must either *Conform* or *Separate* : And if your choice be to be determined by the *Maxim* now laid down, it is impossible you should refuse to *Conform*. For all the World knows, and we daily feel, the miserable Consequences of Religious Distinctions and Divisions. It being therefore so evident, that your *Conformity* would tend to the removing these Evils, and to the *Unity* of this Nation, I shall not labour to prove to you, what you must be already fully convinced of. But tho' this
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be so very plain and open to the Capacities of all ; and tho' your obligation to *Conformity* be, on this account, so manifest and undeniable ; yet I am sensible, that there are some Hindrances and Stumbling-blocks in your way to so good a practice ; and that you appear to yourselves to have Reasons on your side, sufficient to incline you against that *Conformity*, which would be so great a step to *Peace* and *Union* amongst us. My Business therefore at present shall be, to examine those *Reasons* ; and to endeavour to remove those *Hindrances* ; hoping that you will judge sincerely and impartially in a matter of so great and universal Concern.

V. *One* of these *hindrances* I take to be founded on that reason, you think, you have to expect that the *Establishment* should be altered according to your minds. For since our Unity may be effected as well by the *Compliance* of the *Conformists* with *You*, as by *your Conformity* to the *Church* already *Established* ; You seem to imagine, that it is as much the Duty of the *Conformists* to comply with *You*, as it is *your* Duty to comply

with *Them* ; and that it is as reasonable for *you* to expect *their* Conformity to *you*, as it is for *them* to expect *your* Conformity to *them* : And so not to think your selves obliged to *Conformity*, on this account. Now in order to remove this difficulty out of your way, I shall endeavour to shew you,

1. That it is not as reasonable for *you* to expect *their* Compliance with *you*, as for *them* to expect *your* Conformity to the *Established Church*. And,

2. That, supposing it were as reasonable, yet this would be no good Argument against your *Conformity*.

1. That it is not as reasonable for *you* to expect the *compliance* of the *Conformists* with *you*, as it is for *them* to expect your *Conformity* to the *Church* already *established*. And indeed, I cannot think that you your selves can think it so : For you all seem to agree with us in the great necessity, or at least expediency, of some particular Form of Church-Government, and Worship ; and of the establishment of this by *Civil Laws*. Were it in your Power, there is no doubt but you would think your selves obliged

obliged to establish that particular Form, which to your selves should seem most agreeable to the nature of the *Gospel*, and the end of *Publick Assemblies*. Now you must be sensible that an *Establishment* can signifie nothing, nor be of any use, unless it be supposed, either that it is so apparently perfect, and so suitable to the Wishes of all Persons, that none can find fault with it, or discover any thing amiss in the Constitution of it: Or, that there is an obligation lying upon every Christian to have so much regard to *publick Peace* and *Decency*, as to conform himself to what is established, if nothing be required of him but what he acknowledges lawful.

As to the *former* of these Suppositions, It is undeniably beyond the power of Man to frame any Constitution, or draw up any *Form*, or *Directory* for *Worship*, that shall be agreeable to all Persons concerned, or free from Defects and Imperfections. And therefore, were the *Established Form* exactly such as you could wish, there is no Argument you could urge to press *others* to *Conformity* to it, but what concludes now for the
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necessity of *your* Conformity to what is now *Established*; nor can there be any reason for *your* expecting *now* that the *Established Form* should be alter'd according to *your* Wishes, which would not equally encourage *others* to expect the alteration of any other *Establishment*, had *you* order'd it exactly as *you* thought best. If, therefore, *you* should not think it reasonable in *others* to withhold their *Conformity* till the *Established Form* was alter'd to their Minds, provided it were such as *you* could wish it; you cannot think it reasonable in *your* selves to expect the alteration of what is now *Established*, meerly because it is not agreeable to *your* Desires. And as *you* would, in that case, think it much more reasonable for those *others* to *conform* to *your* *Establishment*, than to require the Alteration of it to their Minds: So judge concerning *your* selves *now*, who are exactly in the same Circumstances, and think it much more reasonable for *you* to comply with what is already *Established*, than to insist upon the *alteration* of it according to *your* Wishes. For, if there can be no Argument urged *now* for

for Separation, under pretence of insisting upon Alterations, that might not with equal force be urged by many others, had *You* your selves framed the *Establishment*; And if *you* would think it unreasonable in those *others* to expect that the *Establishment* should be new model'd to their Minds; then certainly there can be no good Argument urged for your selves, in these Circumstances: Nor can it be so reasonable for *you* to expect the *Compliance* of the *Conformists* with *you*, as for *them* to expect *your* Compliance with the *Church* already *Established*. And this leads us to the other *Supposition* I made, which is apparently the Opinion of all who desire any *Establishment*, as *you* always seem to do, *viz.*

That there is an obligation upon every Christian, to conform himself to what is *Established*; provided nothing be required of Him, but what He judges to be Lawful. This is plain to all who plead for an *Establishment*: For, otherwise, what can any *Establishment* signify? To what purpose should we desire or labour after it, unless such an

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Obligation be supposed? It is invain to hope that any *Establishment* can be so framed, as that many Persons will not imagine some Defects and Imperfections in it: And if this Imagination be sufficient to excuse them from complying with the *Establishment*, it is wholly invain to desire, or propose any such thing. If therefore an *Establishment* be necessary, or expedient, the Rule must be, that it is the duty of all *Christians* to comply with it, if no sinful terms of Communion be required of them; unless you will lay all *Establishments* open to infinite Divisions, and frustrate the very End for which alone they are designed. And if this be the *Rule* we are to go by, you cannot but think it your Duty to comply with the *Church* already *Established*. For that there ought to be an *Establishment*, it is *your* Opinion, as well as the Opinion of the *Conformists*. It is plain, therefore, that it is the concern of those who are in Authority, to frame such an one, as they judge most agreeable to the Gospel of Christ, and the Ends of Religious Assemblies. And it is as plain, that nothing

thing remains for others to do, but to enquire whether they can Lawfully conform to this *Establishment*, or no. And from hence it appears, that it cannot be as reasonable for *you* to expect the *Compliance* of your Superiors with *you*, as it is for *them* to expect *your* Conformity to what they have *Established*. For it appears, how meanly soever you may judge of their *Establishment*, that they have done their Duty, according to the best of their Judgment: And so nothing remains, but that you should do *your* Duty. And if an *Establishment* can serve any good purpose, it must be your duty to comply with it, if you find nothing in it contrary to your duty to God. But,

2. Supposing it were as reasonable for *you* to expect the *Compliance* of your Superiors with *you*, as it is for them to expect *your* Conformity to what they have *Established*; yet this would be no argument at all against your *Conformity*, as long as no sinful *Term* of *Communion* is required of *you*. For supposing that *they* do not behave themselves exactly as *you* think they ought, and will not

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comply just according to your desires ; I see not how this can possibly dissolve *your* Obligation to consult the *Peace* and *Unity* of the *Church* of *Christ*. Put the Case, that You your selves were in Authority, and had contrived and established a particular Form of Church-Government, and Worship, according to the best Light, and the truest judgment of your own Consciences; would you think it justifiable, or tolerable, that a number of Men should *Separate* from your *Establishment*, not because any thing was required of them which they accounted Sinful, but because you would not comply with all their Demands, and new Model it according to all their Wishes. And yet this is just the Case before us. Your Superiors have established a *Form*, as it was their Duty to do, agreeably to their best Judgment. *You* do not judge any thing in their Constitution unlawful, as far as *your* Compliance is concerned. But you think it highly reasonable that they should Act according to *your* Judgments, and make Alterations according to *your* Desires: And because they refuse
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to do this, therefore you will separate from them. This, I say, is what you could never excuse in others; and therefore what you ought not to excuse in your selves. This is what tends to the dissolving all *Order*, and *Decency*, in the World. For tho' Obedience be not supposed due to the *Persons* whom you think unreasonable; yet certainly a strict Regard is due to publick *Peace* and *Unity*: And to what purpose do we talk of such an obligation upon all Men? Or to what end do we take these *sacred Words* into our Mouths, if we can dispense with all regard to them, upon such Pretences as these? If our obligation to *Compliance* be dissolved, whenever the judgment of our Superiors is not conformable to our own, it is in vain for us to speak of an *Establishment*: And if there be never any necessity for us to regard *Peace* and *Unity*, but when the *Establishment* of our Superiors is agreeable to our Wishes, we do but prophane those blessed Words, when we most pretend to exalt and magnifie them. Certainly, it is the very Spirit of the Gospel, to comply even with the unreasonable Demands of

others ; I mean with what seems to us founded on no ground ; rather than to give occasion to the least degree of *Discord*, and *Hatred* in the World. It is our Duty to forgive the sharpest Injuries that can be offered us by our Brethren ; nor can we dispense with this Duty, under pretence that it is as much *their* Duty to make us Reparation, and entreat our Pardon, as it is *ours* to be reconciled to them : Such Interpretations as this would effectually render vain and useless, all the Precepts of the Gospel to this purpose. And if in the case of private Persons and equals, we are indispensably obliged to regard *Peace* and *Concord*, even tho' they persist in their unreasonable Treatment of us ; certainly much more, in the case of Superiors, are we obliged to have regard to the same great Concerns, provided nothing sinful be required of us : Because it is their Duty to frame an *Establishment* for us ; because they must be supposed to have framed it according to the best light they enjoyed ; because they design no injury to any private Person, and because there can be no *Peace* without such

such an obligation upon us. Nor can *their* refusal to do what *you* think reasonable any more excuse *you* from Compliance in all lawful things, than *your* refusal to do what *they* judge reasonable, can, in your own opinion, excuse *them* from Compliance with *you*.

Besides all this, If we should suppose it as reasonable for your *Superiors* to comply with *you*, as for *you* to comply with *them*; You must, on the other hand, acknowledge it as reasonable for *you* to comply with *them*, as for *them* to comply with *you*. Now this Argument, it is plain, holds as strongly against *their* compliance with *you*, as against *your* compliance with *them*. If it be good Reasoning on *your* side, it is equally good on *theirs*: and then there cannot possibly be the least ground ever to hope for an *Agreement*. But how ought such an *Argument* to be treated amongst Christians, as demonstrates the utter impossibility of *Peace* and *Unity* amongst them? But if you will not allow it to be good Reasoning on *their* part, as it is plain, from your expectations, you will not; then you must either shew us, that it is
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not the same Reasoning; or you must think it no more an Argument against *your* compliance with *them*, than it is against *their* compliance with *you*. For the matter plainly comes to this; If this be a good Argument against *your* Compliance, it is equally good against the Compliance of your *Superiors*: And then you have no reason to expect *their* Compliance with *you*. But if you will not allow it to be a good Argument against *their* Compliance with *you*, you cannot think it a good Argument against *your* compliance with *them*: And then you have no reason from hence against *your* Compliance with *them*.

And, indeed, the only reason you can have to expect the Compliance of your *Superiors*, must be this, Because it is the Duty of all Men, as well those in *Authority* as in *Subjection*, to consult, as much as possibly they can, the *Peace*, and *Concord*, of the *Society* to which they belong: for the intrinick Justice of *your* demands cannot so easily appear to them as *this*, and ought not to move them any farther than as it appears to them. And if this be the ground of your most reasonable

sonable Expectations, this is not particularly *their* case, but touches your selves very nearly. For if this be the Duty of all Men, it is as much *your* Duty as *theirs*: And it will be found a lamentable excuse, to plead before God at the last Day, that *you* neglected to promote *Concord* and *Unity* amongst Christians, because *others* neglected it; and that *you* refused to do *your* Duty, because *others* refused to do what *you* accounted to be *their* Duty.

I hope, therefore, I may safely conclude, that there cannot be so great Reason for your *Superiors* compliance with *you*, as there is for *your* compliance with *Them*: Or, supposing this to be the Case, that *it is your Duty, notwithstanding this, to have such a regard to Peace and Unity, as to comply with Them, by conforming to the Establishment already made by them.*

VI. The *Second* Argument I shall mention, by which you defend your Practice, and satisfy your Consciences in your *Separation*, is founded on that regard you are obliged to have to your own *Edification*, in your attendance upon

on *Publick Assemblies*. You argue, that you are indispensably obliged to consult your own spiritual Profit and Improvement; that this you cannot do so well, by conforming constantly to the *Church Eſtabliſhed*, as by frequenting *Separate Assemblies*; and that, therefore, you think your ſelves under an obligation to *Separate* from the *Church of England*. This I take to be an *Argument* the moſt univerſally received, and the moſt heartily embraced, of any that concern your *Separation*; and, therefore I ſhall be the more careful to examine the full force of it. And, under this Head, I hope to ſhew you,

1. *That there is nothing wanting in the Constitution of the Church of England, that you can ſuppoſe neceſſary to your private Edification.*

2. *That after your private Edification is ſo far conſulted, it is your Duty to regard the publick Edification of the whole Church of Chriſt.*

3. *That you cannot conſult the Edification of the Church of Chriſt, more effectually, than by promoting Peace and Concord amongſt Chriſtians.*

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These *three* Points will very much help to determine your Duty, as far as the matter of *Edification* is concerned.

1. *That there is nothing wanting in the Constitution of the Church of England, that you can suppose necessary to your private Edification.* The *Ends* of all our *Publick Assemblies* on Religious Accounts, are compleatly answered, if the *Constitution* of our *Publick Services* be so framed, as that we can praise Almighty God, and pray to him as we ought; and be perfectly instructed in our Duty, according to his Will. For the *former* of these purposes, the *Liturgy* is designed: For the *latter*, the *Sermons* constantly Preached, together with those *Portions* of *Scripture* that are Read to the People, in the daily *Service* of the *Church*.

Now, I cannot but think, that in the serious Use of this *Liturgy*, you may be more secure of offering up to God such Praises and Prayers as are acceptable to him, and fit for *Publick* and *general Occasions*, than you can be in any *separate Assembly*, where the whole is left to the Discretion and Abilities of the *Minister*. There is nothing in this

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Service indecent ; nothing unsuitable to the Majesty of him who receives it, or unbecoming the Character of those who offer it. It is composed of *Confessions* ; of *Praises*, and *Thanksgivings* ; of *Prayers* and *Intercessions* ; and these very well adapted to the Conditions, and Obligations, and Necessities, of the generality of *Christians*. And what could you wish for more in a *Publick Service* ? Or, where can you go, where you can be certain of so good and so proper Assurances ? If you say, you have been present at this *Service*, and find little entertainment in it ; that it is dry and jejune ; unapt to move your Affections, and raise your Devotions ; consider whence this must have proceeded. Have you come to it with a hearty good Will, and a sincere Desire of relishing it ? Have you thrown out of your Minds all Prejudices, and endeavoured to cure all that indifference to it, which a long disuse may have caused ? Have you attended to it with Application and Seriousness ? And, above all, have you prepared your Hearts before Hand, and endeavoured to furnish them with such Thoughts

Thoughts, and such Affections, as are proper to be expressed in all the several parts of *Publick Worship*? This is the main Point of all: And whoever hath conscientiously done this, I am persuaded, will not lightly speak evil of the *Established Liturgy*; and will not easily be induced either to treat it as a cold and empty Service, or to prefer such *Compositions* before it, as He must join with as soon as he hears them, and often before he can pass a true Judgment upon them. This, indeed, is true, that the Plainness and Simplicity of the *Liturgy*, render it more intelligible to all Capacities, than any *Prayers* set up in opposition to it; But this Plainness is not such as can be despised by any of the greatest Sense; and is so far from being a Blemish, that it is an Excellence in it, and ought to recommend it to the Approbation and Use of all amongst us. And, on the other side, it must be acknowledged by all who have considered it, that it is so framed, as to be capable of expressing the devout Affections of all who bring any Devotion along with them; and of exciting, and awakening all such

Religious Passions as are necessary, or becoming, in their proper Places, and upon proper Occasions. If, therefore, you desire any *Established Form of Worship*, how much greater reason have you to be thankful that this is so well suited to the *End* of it, than to *separate* yourselves from the use of it, because it is not, in every Expression, what you could wish it?

And as the *Established Church* hath thus provided for your worshiping God, as becomes *Christians*; so also it is certain and evident, that there is no one Point of Duty and Practice, which you cannot be as secure of learning, under the *Ministry* of this *Church*, as of any other whatever; that you may be sure of hearing all the Doctrines of the Gospel honestly and compleatly delivered, and all the Motives of it fairly and affectionately proposed. The Portions of Holy Scripture that make up a constant part of the daily Service, are of excellent use to this purpose; and the Preaching of the *Ministers* in this *Church*, is, at least, as sufficient for this *End*, as *any* that is opposed to it. Nor need I
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use more words upon this head, because the Matter is too plain, and manifest, to be denied.

What is it, therefore, that can induce you to leave the *Established Church*, under pretence of *Edification*? The *Liturgy* of it is so framed, that you may praise God, and pray to him, in every respect as becomes the best *Christians*: And if it do not seem, at first hearing, so moving, and affecting as you could wish; you ought to be willing to think, that it proceeds rather from some defect in *your selves*, than from the coldness of *that*; and to consider, that it is fully sufficient for the expressing, and exciting, all the devout Affections that are necessary to *Christians* assembled together. And the *Teaching* part is so managed, that you cannot fear the want of any necessary and useful *Instructions*. And if you can worship God, and be taught to live, in all respects, like *Christians*, as well in the *Communion* of the *Established Church*, as in any *separate Congregation*; then, certainly, *there is nothing wanting in the Constitution of this Church, that you can suppose necessary to your private Edification.*

tion. The *second* Proposition I undertook to speak to, under this Head, will not require so many Words, *viz.*

2. *That, after your private Edification is thus far consulted, it is your Duty to regard the publick Edification of the whole Church of Christ.* This, I say, will not require much Illustration, because I have already touched upon it; and because all those acknowledge the Truth of it, in other Words, who ever plead for Peace; all who argue for *Concessions*, or for *Conformity* on any Terms; all who acknowledge that *Christians* are concern'd in the good of their *Brethren*, and the Happiness of the World about them. And who is there so little acquainted with the Nature and Design of the *Christian Religion*, that doth not acknowledge this; and that is not sensible what a Stress the *Gospel* lays upon the *Social Virtues*, and with how much Affection it recommends to us the Advantage and Interest of the whole *Christian Church*? First, indeed, we are to regard our selves, so far as to secure our own Innocence, and to pay that Worship to God, which is due to him: But
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after this is secured, He that most tenderly regards the Peace of human Society, and the Happiness of his *Christian Brethren*, is most likely to be high in the Glory of *God*, and in the Favour of his Lord and Master. And if it be not a sufficient Inducement to *Conformity* to any *settled*, or *established* Church, that we can worship God acceptably, and promote our own Salvation in it; then certainly, *Peace*, and *Love*, are insignificant Trifles, and not worthy to be put in the Balance against the least Fancy, or Humour of our own. But this cannot be: And we have more reason, from almost every Page of the *New Testament*, to think, that one who frequents the *established* Worship, not because it is the most acceptable to him, or most agreeable to his present Sentiments, but only on the account of *Peace*, and for fear of giving Encouragement to such Distinctions as may prove the occasion of much *Enmity* and *Ill-will* amongst Christians; that this Man, I say, shall never find any reason to complain of the small and inconsiderable Defects of it, and shall be found at last,

to have consulted even his own private *Edification*, much more than those who have followed other Methods, and acted upon other Principles. But I am to shew,

3. *That you cannot consult the Edification of the Church of Christ more effectually, than by promoting Peace and Concord among Christians.* Knowledge, saith St. Paul, *1 Cor. 8. 1. puffeth up, but Charity edifieth.* And the Consequence of this is, that every thing that can promote *Charity* and *Concord* amongst *Christians*, is to be the great Employment of their Lives; and every thing that tends to destroy those great goods, and to promote *Strife* and *Discord*, is conscientiously to be avoided by them. No Society was ever *built up*, and made solid and durable, in any other Methods, but those of *Concord*; whereas the most solid and firm Societies in the World, have been disturbed and dissipated, and totally ruined by *Discord*. What then do we think will become of that *Christian Society* to which we belong, if we think much to disregard our own private Humours and Fancies for the sake of the *Publick*, and go on to pursue

persue such Methods, as have already
 enflamed us against one another, and
 daily prove the Causes of much *Ill-will*
 and Hatred amongst us? Was the Chri-
 stian Church ever *edified*, or built up, by
 the *Strife* and *mutual Animosities* of those
 who composed it? Or, can we hope to
 deliver it down secure and unshaken to
 Posterity, by such a Behaviour? Who
 would think that *Christians* should not
 be ready to sacrifice any private Opini-
 on to the Interest of their common
Christianity? And yet, we live in those
 unhappy Times, in which *Christians* are
 rather labouring to find out Arts to ruine
 the *common Cause*, than willing to bend
 their own Designs and Opinions to the
 support of it; and are rather studious
 to keep alive the miserable Distractions
 of the *Church of Christ*, than ready to
 cure and compose them, even by the
 easiest and most commendable Methods.
 Nothing adds so much Glory to the
Christian Church, as the *Union of Chri-*
stians: And as nothing gives more Beau-
 ty to it, so nothing gives more Strength,
 than this. Nothing makes it more
 firm, and happy, in it self; and nothing
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renders it more aimable in the Eyes of others, or gains more *Profelytes* to it. Nothing consequently can more consult the *Edification* of the *Christian Church*, than to promote *Peace* and *Love* amongst *Christians*; and nothing can more become *you*, than to make this the great *End* of your *Actions*; especially considering, that you cannot consult the *Edification* of the *Christian Church*, without consulting your own private *Edification*; and that it is impossible you *your selves* should be more effectually *edified*, than by regarding the *Publick Good*, and by promoting the *Practice* of those peaceable and charitable *Virtues*, which make up so great a Part of the *Gospel*.

And since it is so apparent, that your private *Edification* may be sufficiently promoted in your *Communion* with the *Established Church*; that, after that Point is secured, it is your Duty to regard the *Edification* of the *Church of Christ*; and that you cannot consult the *Edification* of the *Christian Church* more effectually, than by promoting *Peace* and *Concord* amongst *Christians*: I need not tell you
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what follows from hence. For, if it be your indispensable Duty to promote *Peace* and *Concord* amongst *Christians*, then you are indispensably obliged to avoid whatever tends to *Uncharitableness* and *Dissension* amongst them. And, if the Method in which you are at present engaged, do manifestly give occasion to constant *Discord* and *Violence* amongst us, remember, that you are to answer for it: And what Account will you be able to give of it, when you cannot deny, but that you might have been in a secure way to Heaven, without entring upon this Method. Judge therefore, in your selves, whether you can do any thing more worthy of the Name of *Christ*, than to help to put an end to the Misery and Shame of *this* part of the *Christian* World, by uniting with that *Church* from which you have separated. And, from all this laid together, judge in your selves, whether there be any thing in the *Argument* commonly drawn from *Edification*, sufficient to divert you from *constant Conformity* to it.

VII. But, notwithstanding what hath been hitherto urged, you may perhaps

think, that the *Toleration*, allowed by the same *Laws* which have *establiſhed* the *Church of England*, hath wholly taken off your *Obligation* ; and diſſolved all that *Necceſſity*, you might otherwiſe have been under, of *conforming* to the *Church of England*. Now, ſuppoſing it to be in the power of a *Toleration* to leave you ſo far at liberty, pray conſider, whether the *Toleration* which you allege, was ever deſigned to give this Liberty to ſuch as acknowledge *Communion* with the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, to be lawful ; and conſequently, whether the very deſign of the *Toleration*, do not rather condemn, than acquit you. But it ſignifies little, in our preſent *Cauſe*, whether this be ſo, or no. For I argue not meerly from the *Eſtabliſhment* of the *Church by civil Laws* : But from thoſe *Obligations* to regard the *Peace*, and *Concord* of *Chriſtians*, which are ever the ſame, with, and without, the *Interpoſition* of the *civil Power*. It is ever the *Duty* of *Chriſtians* to have the ſame ſacred *Regard* to them ; and ſuch a *Duty* as can never be diſpenſed with. So that were the *Church of England* only
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the settled Church of the Place, without the *Establishment* of civil Laws, your Obligations to *Conformity* would be still indispensable; because you could not consult the *Publick Happiness*, and *Peace*, without it. Nor can any *Toleration* dissolve these Obligations; because no *Toleration* can dissolve your Obligations to consult the *Publick Happiness*, and *Peace*, as much as you possibly can. This remains the Duty of a *Christian* for ever: Nothing can disengage him from it, but the utter Impossibility of the thing, or the Inconsistency of it with his own Innocence, and eternal Salvation.

But when you speak of *Toleration*, the very mention of it cannot but put you in mind, that the *Church of England* hath not only *Prescription*, and a settled *Possession*, to plead for it self, but also an *Establishment* by civil Authority, as well as *Ecclesiastical*. And, therefore, if you should fix it only upon *this*, as you often do, yet this is sufficient to condemn your Disregard to it; as long as any Regard is acknowledged to be due to the Injunctions, and Prescriptions, of
lawful

lawful Authority. For when any particular Church is established by the civil Authority of a Land, Conformity to it is made the exprefs Command of that Authority, and is required of all who judge it to be lawful: And Non-conformity in such, becomes not only a Neglect of the Peace and Happiness of Society, but also an Act of Disobedience to *lawful Authority.* The Design of the Establishment, could be no other, but that all should conform to this Church, who can possibly do it with a safe Conscience: And consequently, the Toleration cannot be supposed contrary to the very design of the Establishment. But, however that be, our Obligations to consult the Peace, and Concord of Christians, can be dissolved by no humane Permissions; and consequently, the Toleration cannot dissolve them. And from both these it follows, that the Toleration cannot, in the least, affect the Duty of constant Communion with the Church of England, or excuse you in your Neglect of it.

VIII. I come now to examine another Reason, too commonly urged against constant Communion with the Church of England:

England: And that is founded upon a mistaken Notion of a *Catholick Spirit*, and of *Christian Moderation*. For it is said by many of you, that *constant Conformity* to this particular *Church* is utterly inconsistent with true *Moderation*, and that *Charitable and Catholick Spirit* that becomes a *Christian*. Now, in reply to this, I shall endeavour to make it appear;

1. *That true Christian Moderation is of such a Nature, that it will it self incline and lead you to constant Conformity with the Church of England.* And,

2. *That constant Conformity is perfectly consistent with a true Catholick Spirit, and the most extensive Christian Charity.*

And if these two Points can be clearly made out, they will entirely remove out of the way this *Objection* against your *constant Communion* with the *Church of England*.

1. I shall endeavour to shew you, *that true Christian Moderation is of such a Nature, that it will, it self, incline and lead you to Constant Conformity.* For *Christian Moderation*, rightly stated, is a temper of Mind, disposing us to *Peace*, and *Concord*; teaching us to give up all
lesser

lesser Concerns to these, and to recede
 from what we imagine to be due to us
 in Justice, or from what we might, in
 strictness of Right, lawfully insist up-
 on ; to recede, I say, from this, for the
 sake of a great and universal Good. And
 the Excellence of this *Christian Grace*,
 in its Influence upon humane *Society*, ap-
 pears from hence, that it leaves not Men
 at liberty, and indifferent to *Peace*, and
Concord, till they are all satisfied in their
 Judgments, so far as to be of one Opini-
 on, and to think the same things just
 and reasonable in themselves. This
 would be endless : And no one could
 hope to see *Peace* in any one *Society* in
 the World, upon such Terms ; there be-
 ing little reason to hope for an universal
 Agreement in the same Notions. But
Moderation, as it was sincerely designed
 to promote the peace of *Society*, so it takes
 a more effectual Course than this, to ac-
 complish its Design. For it teaches,
 and obliges, those that differ never so
 widely in their Opinions concerning les-
 ser Matters, to unite, and agree, for
 the sake of something that is of more
 Weight and Importance. *Moderation*,
 it

it is true, doth not oblige us to alter our Judgment about the Reasonableness, or Unreasonableness; the Justice, or Injustice, of any particular Matter: But it doth what is much more likely to contribute to the happiness of the World; for it obliges us to give up a Right, and to recede from what appears to us to be a reasonable Demand, rather than to give the least occasion to the disturbance, and unhappiness, of *Society*. So that it appears to be the great business of *Moderation*, to induce us to practise all *lawful* things for the sake of *Peace*, and *Concord* amongst Christians. And consequently, your *constant Conformity* to the *established Church*, being, in your own Judgments, lawful, *Christian Moderation* is so far from inclining you to refuse it, that it doth, it self, lead you to it; as it leads you to all Acts of Compliance, and Condescension, for the sake of a great, and universal Good. This, I think a true Account of *Christian Moderation*, and particularly of that Place in the *New Testament*, where *St. Paul* prescribes to *Christians*, that their *Moderation* be known unto all Men.

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But supposing this be not an exact Account of this Matter, yet I am certain, that here is nothing laid down, but what is apparently the Duty of every *Christian*: And if that be so, it is of small Importance whether He be obliged to this Duty by the Precepts of *Moderation*, or by some other Precepts of the *Gospel*. It is certain, that your Obligations to consult the *Peace*, and *Happiness* of *Society*, cannot be answered, unless you are ready to give up all lesser Considerations to *these*. Nay, it is certain, that all the Precepts in the *Christian Religion* that concern *Peace*, and *Concord*, are vain, and useless, unless this Method be taken. For can you possibly hope, or expect, to see such an Agreement amongst *Christians*, as we all pretend to wish for, if we must wait till they are all persuaded of the Justice and Reasonableness of one another's Demands? till they are of the same Opinion, in those Points in which they now differ? We may as well expect a Reconciliation, and Agreement, between the most distant things in Nature. But here is a plain and easy way to *Peace*, and *Concord*; if
Christians

Christians would be persuaded not to break the *Peace* of *Society*, for the sake of any matter of less Importance; for the sake of what they might omit, without endangering their own eternal Happiness. This is a *Method*, of all others, the most level to all Capacities; it being no difficult matter to determine whether such a particular Behaviour be conducive to the publick *Peace*, or contrary to it; and every Man being his own Judge of the *Lawfulness*, or *Unlawfulness* of any Practice. So that this Method ought to be acceptable to you, as it is the only probable way, to come to any tolerable degree of *Peace* amongst *Christians*.

It is a very bad Notion of *Moderation*, that is embraced by too many, who think it the business of this *Grace* to make us indifferent how we behave ourselves in lesser Matters, provided we hold to the main, and fundamental Points of *Religion*. For it cannot be the design of *Moderation* to break in upon any other Precepts of the *Gospel*, or upon any of the Dictates of sound *Reason*. And since it is certain, that the *Peace*, and *Happiness* of *Society* is

most passionately recommended to the care, and regard of Christians; it is as certain, that *Moderation* cannot dissolve the Obligations of *Christians* to have a tender Concern for the good of the whole *Church*, or make it an indifferent Matter to them, which way of Behaviour they chuse: But, whatever the true Notion of it be, it certainly leaves them under the same Obligations to promote *Peace*, to which the Laws of their *Master* have bound them up.

But there is yet another Notion of this *Virtue*, according to which it is declared by some, to be the Nature, and Office of *Christian Moderation*, to regulate our Opinions concerning every thing, and to teach us not to value any thing above what it deserves, and not to lay a greater weight upon any Matter, than the Nature of it requires. Now, tho' this cannot be a just Account of that *Moderation* we find spoken of in the *New Testament*, yet it is certain, that it is our Duty to fix just Notions of things in our Minds, and to value every thing according to
its

its Excellence, and no farther. And if any Persons think fit to call it by the Name of *Moderation*, it is not worth while to dispute that Point. But I must then observe, that *Moderation*, in this Notion of it, hath not the least Tendency, in its Nature, to hinder your *Constant Conformity* to the *Church of England*, or to induce you to give any Encouragement to a *Separation* from it. For if it be the peculiar Office of *Moderation* to keep your Value for every thing, within due Bounds; and to regulate it so that it be not placed upon any Object in an undue Measure: It will, indeed, teach you to value every thing less than your own eternal Salvation; but it cannot teach you to undervalue the *Peace*, and *Concord*, of *Christians*, as Trifles of no Importance. No, the Value of *these* will be always great, next to your own everlasting Happiness; and cannot be affected, or altered, by *Christian Moderation*: Which, if it rightly settle the due Place of every thing, will certainly fix *these* in a very high Degree, and make them second to nothing but *Salvation* it self.

And,

And, if *Moderation* it self, according to this account of it, will unavoidably lead you to this, how can you shew this Regard, that is apparently due to these goods, whilst you refuse that *Conformity* to a lawful *Establishment*, which would mightily promote them; and give Encouragement to those Divisions, which are the greatest Hindrances to them? And how can you be said, in this Conduct of your selves, to satisfy the Demands, and obey the Dictates, of that very *Moderation*, which you plead in your Defence; unless you suppose it becomes a *Christian* to have an indifferent and moderate Regard, to that *Unity*, and *Peace*, which are the very *Glory*, and *Strength* of *Christianity*?

Indeed, were there any thing in your *Constant Communion* with our Church, which would necessarily oblige you to place a greater Value upon any thing in the *Constitution* of it, than it really, and truly deserves; something might be urged from the Virtue of *Moderation*, in this sense of it, to defend you in your Neglect of it. But *Constant Conformity* implies not in it any thing like this.

this. For if you have framed your Opinions so, as to think meanly of the *Publick Service* of the *Established Church*, in comparison with the ways of *Worship* set up in opposition to it; (which I cannot imagine to proceed from any thing, but *Education*, or *Custom*;) *Constant Communion* doth not oblige you to think, or declare the contrary: Nor doth it necessarily imply any thing in it, but that you do, upon some Considerations, prefer it before *Separation*; whether for its own sake, or the sake of the *Publick Peace*, and *Unity*, no one can judge from the Practice of it. And consequently, the Principles of *Moderation*, this way explained, cannot reasonably influence you against *Constant Conformity*; because *Constant Conformity* is the best way of expressing that *Regard* which is certainly due to *Peace*, and *Concord*; and because it implies nothing in it, that can oblige you to place an unjust Value upon any Part of our *Constitution*.

Whatsoever, therefore, be supposed to be the Nature, and Office, of *Christian Moderation*, it is evident, that it must
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rather engage you *to* Communion with the *Church* of *England*, than help to influence you *against* it. Having thus endeavoured to shew you, with how little reason this excellent, and truly Christian Grace is urged against the reasonableness of your *Conformity*, I come now to shew,

2. *That Constant Conformity is perfectly consistent with a true Catholick Spirit, and the most extensive Christian Charity.* And this will appear by considering what this *Catholick*, and *Charitable* frame of Spirit is, to which we are obliged by the *Christian Religion*. Now, it is plain, that there is nothing in the *Gospel* of our *Saviour*, designed to lay an Obligation upon us to approve, or encourage, by Words, or by Presence, all the different ways of *Publick Worship* amongst *Christian Brethren*. This cannot be the Duty of *Christians*; because the Practice of it is impossible, without the utmost Inconvenience, and Disorder: Nor did I ever yet hear of any one, who could produce one *Text of Scripture* to shew the Necessity of this; or who thought himself obliged to give equal

qual Encouragement to all *Religious Parties* amongst *Christians*: And yet, if the Encouragement be not as equal, as possible, I see not how this Obligation is satisfied, if there be such an Obligation upon us. And we find amongst those who speak most of this *Catholick Spirit*, that it extends not, in Practice, generally, to more than two sorts of *Christians*; and this, with a very remarkable, and constant Inequality. So little do these Persons themselves seem to think themselves obliged to a just, and exact Practice, of this imagined Duty, or to tie themselves up to a rigorous Observation of it. This, therefore, cannot be included in the true Notion of that *Catholick*, and *Charitable Spirit*, which becomes all *Christians*; because it is a Practice no where plainly recommended; and, I had almost said, , utterly impossible; and, in the least Degree of it, highly disorderly, and the cause of great Indecencies, and Improprieties, in the *Church*.

And as this is a sufficient Reason for all *Christians* not to think themselves

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concerned in any such Duty ; so *You*, especially, to whom I now speak, are very peculiarly obliged to resist the Progress of any such Notions in the World, if the least *Concern* for *Publick Peace*, and *Unity*, remain in your Breasts. For it is often professed in your Names, that you desire an *Establishment* ; and that some *Amendments*, and *Abatements*, would intirely reconcile you to the present *Constitution*. This, the best, and greatest of your *Ministers* have declared, in their own Name, and in yours ; and continue to this Day to do so. If, therefore, it be a Duty to communicate with all *Sects* of *Christians* ; how can you profess your selves ready to communicate constantly with the *Church* of *England*, upon some *Terms*, and to leave off all such *Encouragement*, for the future, to any who separate from it ? But if you sincerely desire such *Alterations* as would reconcile you, and make you *constant Conformists* ; how then can you think this a necessary duty of *Christianity* ? And why do you go on to encourage such Notions as must render vain all At-
tempts

tempts towards our *Unity*, and *Concord*? For if this Encouragement be due, according to the Laws of the *Gospel*, and the Nature of *Christianity*, to all the differing Parties of *Christians*; then what will the best *Establishment* in the World signifie towards the *Ends* of an *Establishment*? No *Peace* can be this way effected; since there can be no Obligation upon Men, according to these Principles, to conform to it, were it the most perfect that could possibly be imagined. Take care, therefore, lest your present Practice oppose your professed Design; and sow not such Seeds of Dissension in the Land, as will utterly confound all designs of *Union*, and *Agreement*, and render all *Accommodations*, fruitless, and ineffectual. If you have the least Desire of such an *Establishment* as you could intirely comply with, entertain not these Principles, which strike at the Root of all *Establishments*, and prevent all the good Purposes of them. And if you have any Concern for *Peace*, and *Unity* amongst us, encourage not such Notions, as are inconsistent with

that regard to *Peace*, and *Unity*, which the *Christian Religion* enjoyns. This is another Reason, why it cannot be the duty of *Christians* to give such Encouragement to all the differing ways of *Worship* amongst *Christians*; because it is the Duty of *Christians* to consult the *Peace* of the *Christian Church*. And whether this be most likely to be done, by *Conformity* to a *lawful Established Church*, or by an indifferent Encouragement of all the several *Churches* amongst us, let any one judge. Our Duty is to do all lawful Things, for the sake of *Peace*, and to promote *Love* amongst *Christians*: And yet many amongst us act, as if they thought it their Duty to do every thing possible, in order to encourage *Divisions*, and *Hatred*, in the *Christian Church*. Why else, do they rather chuse to find out such *new Duties* in the *Gospel*, never heard of before in the *Christian Church*, than to practise the *old*? And why do they refuse to walk in that Path, which leads plainly, and directly, to greater Degrees of *Unity*, and *Concord*? A true *Christian Spirit* cannot direct us to such

a Behaviour; any more than it can direct us to disturb the *Peace of Society*, and to render all designs of *Accommodation* ineffectual.

It is true, that it is our Duty to acknowledge all *Christians* to be such ; to love our Neighbour as our selves ; to do unto all Men, as it is reasonable for us to wish they would do unto us, were we in their Condition ; to be kind, and tender-hearted, one towards another ; to practise all Instances of *Humanity*, and *Charity*, towards our Brethren ; to abhor all thoughts of Rigour, or Inhumanity, for the sake of any Religious Difference ; and to do them all the good that is in our Power, and that is consistent with the Obligations we are under to our selves, and to the rest of the World. All this, and the like, we are strictly obliged to : But this doth not at all bring us under any Necessity of giving any Encouragement to the *Errors* of our *Brethren* ; especially such *Errors* as have a bad Influence upon *Humane Society*, and prove the occasion of much Unhappiness to it : But *Christian Charity* rather obliges
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us to the contrary ; to endeavour to convince them of their *Errors*, and to put a stop to the evil Consequences of them. But it is wonderful to hear this divine Virtue alleged against the reasonableness of *Constant Conformity*; when it is so very evident, that there is not one single Branch of it, but what may be duly, and punctually performed by a *Christian*, in *Communion* with the *Church of England*. Nay, I will add, that this Grace may be practised, in greater extent, by such an one, than it can be by any who give encouragement to *Separation* from it : because the *former* neglects no part of Charity which the *other* practises ; and, besides this, shews a sacred regard to *Publick Peace*, by giving no Encouragement to any thing that is the occasion of *Uncharitableness*, or *Disturbance*, amongst *Christians* ; which seems to be one of the first, and principal Branches of *Charity* ; and which the Person who thinks *Constant Communion* with this particular *Church* not worthy of his Regard, cannot be said to do. And, indeed, this seems to me so considerable a part of *Christian Charity*,
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and so necessary an Effect of a truly *Catholick Spirit*, that I cannot but think that we may draw a much better *Argument* from *these*, in behalf of your *Constant Conformity*, than any that can be urged against it. For what nobler Instance of *Christian Charity* can there be supposed, than to regard the *Peace* of the *Christian Church*? And what more genuine and natural Effect of a truly *Catholick Spirit*, than to endeavour to put some stop to the Divisions, and, consequently, the uncharitable Heats, among *Christians*? This will shew the most *extensive Charity*, and the most *Catholick Spirit*: And, consequently, if an *Argument* taken from *these*, can have any Influence upon you, it must determine you to *Constant Conformity*. At least, I may have leave to say, that it is evident from what hath been advanced upon this Head, that there is nothing included in *these*, that can influence you to give any Encouragement to *unnecessary Separations* from the *Church of England*; or that can be supposed inconsistent with the strictest *Communion* with it.

Having

Having thus distinctly consider'd such of your *Reasons* against *Constant Conformity* to the *Established Church*, as seem'd to me most generally, and most firmly, received amongst *You*; and having offer'd to your Thoughts some Observations upon them: I shall only propose a few more *Considerations* to you, and so make an *End*.

IX. If you judge it unlawful for you to conform constantly, because this would be to approve, and encourage, *unnecessary Impositions* in the *Christian Church*, which you are bound to oppose, and resist; I desire you would consider, that this will equally hold against *Conformity* to all *Establishments*, because none can be framed without *unnecessary Impositions*, and against our own *Establishment*; tho' it should be amended according to the Demands which have been openly made, in *your Name*, as well as the Name of your *Ministers*. You profess your selves ready to joyn with this *Establishment* so amended: and yet some *unnecessary Impositions* will unavoidably be left in it. How then can you urge an Argument against *Conformity* to it,

it, as it is at present ; which concludes as strongly against *Conformity* to it, when your Demands are answered; and you your selves are ready to comply with it. But in truth, *Constant Conformity* doth not imply in it either the *Approbation*, or Encouragement, of *unnecessary Impositions*. It implies in it only, as I observed before, that you think fit to comply with the *Use* of them ; but for what Reasons, it doth not declare. And, besides, supposing it did imply in it the Encouragement of *unnecessary Impositions* upon *Christians*, which in themselves are neither good, nor bad : On the other side, *Separation* from this Church implies in it, as much, the Encouragement of such Principles, and Practices, as make all *Unity*, and *Peace*, impossible, and impracticable. The Burthen is not so heavy yet in this *Church*, as to deserve much Zeal, and Heat against it: But remember, that if, on the one hand, you give occasion to the Imposition of *more Ceremonies* ; on the other hand, you give occasion to much *Violence*, and *Uncharitableness*, whether you design it, or not. And which of the two can we think the more acceptable to God; the Man who re-

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fuses *Constant Conformity*, for fear he should encourage the Imposition of some indifferent Things ; or the Man who practises it, for fear he should encourage the *Violence*, and *Uncharitableness*, that are likely to accompany all *Religious Divisions*? Certainly, it is more Praise-worthy, to submit to some *Impositions*, which had better not have been ordained, than to do any thing that tends to the disturbance of the *Christian Church*. Supposing it to be a Matter not laudable in it self ; yet certainty it is our Duty to chuse this, rather than a *greater Evil*: And it cannot be necessary for a *Christian* to resist such *Impositions* ; when he cannot do it without endangering Matters of infinitely greater Moment. For the supposed, possible, Inconveniences of the *former*, are not worthy to be put into the Balance against the visible, and sensible, evil Consequences of the *latter* : Nor is there any thing to be dreaded from the *one*, comparable to that *Violence*, and *Uncharitableness*, and that *Dis honour* to *Christianity*, that is seen to follow from the *other*. And how then, can you think it worth a *Christians's* while, to testify against *Impositions*,

Impositions, not sinful in themselves, at the expence of Publick *Peace*, and *Unity*?

X. Consider that *your Case* is very different from the Case of *Ministers*: And therefore, that how hard soever the *Terms* of *Ministerial Conformity* may seem, this cannot excuse *you* in your *Separation*. The *Terms* of *Lay-Conformity*, in which only *you* are concerned, are few, and lawful. I need not tell you what they are, because you know by Experience, that they are not so intolerable, but that you can sometimes comply with them. Nor need I add any more on this Head; and so shall only appeal to your *Ministers* themselves, (which, I believe, I may venture to do, in this Case) and entreat *you* to consult the best, and most judicious amongst them, whether *They* should have thought themselves under an Obligation to *separate* from the *Established Church*, supposing no other *Terms* had been required of them, but what are now required of *you*: Or rather, whether *They* would not, upon such *Terms*, have judged themselves to be under an indispensable Obligation to hold *Communion* with it, and to give all law-

ful Encouragement to it. Had this been the *Case*, I cannot but think, if I may have leave to judge from all their Conduct, and all their Proposals, that the *Act of Uniformity* would never have been complained of by them, or any material Objections urged against the *Terms* of their *Conformity*. And if this appear to be so, supposing them in your *Circumstances*, this should induce you to think seriously of your Behaviour; and not to disturb the *Peace* of the *Christian Church*, for the sake of those *Terms of Communion*, which you acknowledge to be in themselves, lawful.

XI. But if after all that can be said, to persuade you to *Constant Conformity*, you should be apt to think, that our *Divisions* are come to such an Heighth, and the Seeds of *Discord*, and *Uncharitableness*, sown so universally thro' the Land, that your *Conformity* can do but little towards restoring *Peace*, and *Charity*, amongst us; and is hardly worthy of your Concern, on this Account: Consider, that this cannot excuse you from doing what you can, towards that glorious *End*; and let this be never so little, it will be
accepted

accepted by God, as the only Testimony you can give, how highly you value them. We have not done our Duties, in our particular Stations, till we have done all in our Power, to promote *Love*, and *Concord*, amongst *Christians*: And if every one should neglect to do this, because his Influence will reach but to a small Compass, it is impossible they should ever be restored. The fewer Occasions there be of *Strife*, and *Variance*; the more likely is true *Christianity* to flourish, and the *Gospel* to be well spoken of, in the World. And since your *Conformity* will remove many of these Occasions at present; and is not unlikely, thro' the Blessing of God, to lay the Foundation of a lasting *Peace*, and glorious *Concord*, amongst us, in Times to come; how can you think, that you have that Regard to these great Goods, which *Christians* ought to have, if you still neglect that *Conformity*, which is the greatest Demonstration you can give of your Regard to them.

XII. If therefore, the *Terms* of your *Conformity* to the *Established Church* be lawful; if you can by *this* promote
Peace,

Peace, and Love, amongst Christians;
 If it be your indispensable Duty to do
 what you can towards this End, howe-
 ver others neglect it, and disregard it;
 If you can, by your *Conformity*, highly
 consult the *Edification* of the whole *Chri-*
stian Church, without neglecting your
 own, or endangering your Salvation;
 If neither true *Christian Moderation*, nor
 a *Catholick, and Charitable Spirit*, nor
Zeal against Impositions, include in them
 any thing inconsistent with *Constant Con-*
formity: Let the Honour of that Name
 by which you are called; and the Sense of
 those Mischiefs we feel from our misera-
 ble Divisions, and Distinctions, move
 you to the Practice of it. Call to mind
 the Beauty, and Glory of a compliant
 Temper; and think how unbecoming
 you are apt to judge it in others, that
 they will not yield up the contested
 Points for the sake of Peace. Look out
 into the World, and see what Heat and
 Fury our *Religious Distinctions* add to
 all other Contests; how much unbecom-
 ing Passion they cause amongst your
 selves, and amongst others who oppose
 you; how fatally they turn the Edge,
 and

and Bent, of Men's Minds, from Concerns of infinite Moment, to Trifles of no Consideration; how many Opportunities they will ever give our *common Enemies*, within, and without us, to carry on their Designs; and perhaps, at last, to bring about our utter Ruine. Reflect on all this, and much more that might be added; and then consider seriously with your selves, whether it can be enough for you to follow your own Inclinations, without any regard to the World of *Christians* about you; and whether it can become you to refuse to do any thing in order to put an End to these Miseries. Last of all, Think not your own *Eternal Salvation* unconcerned in this Matter: For the Precepts of the *Gospel* make it the indispensable Duty of every *Christian*, to follow after Peace; to avoid every Practice that may prove the occasion of *Uncharitableness*; and to promote Love, and Concord, in the World. And, certainly, there is Force enough in all these Considerations, to induce You to forsake the Separation you are engaged in, and to practice Constant Conformity to the Church of England.

F I N I S.

(22)

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no Consideration; how many Oppor-
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bring about our true Liberty. Reflect
ADVERTISEMENT.

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